

Himalayan Times

The voice of the Darjeeling Hills

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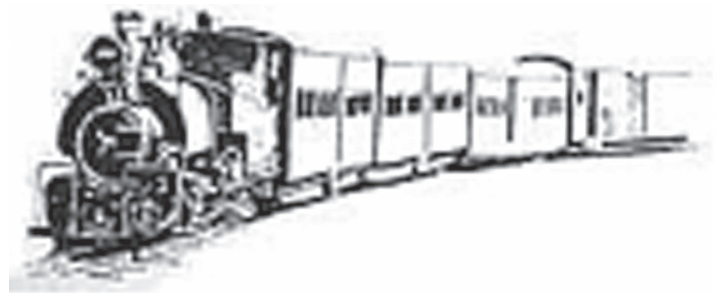
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EDITORIAL

During the period when the campaigning for the Kalimpong Municipal elections was at its peak, a seemingly bright candidate put up several posters in several areas of the town urging the vehicle owners of Kalimpong to sell their cars and alternate it with a more suitable form of transport more adaptable to the pot hole filled roads of the town- the alternate suggested was a Horse!!! The posters and the pun that it carried were intended to highlight the extremely poor condition of the roads in Kalimpong.

Though quite a few of the roads have had repairs since the posters sprung up, the vehicle owners could still give the suggestion in the posters a second thought though this time it is less due to the quality of the roads and more due to the quality of the Fuel that the Fuel Pumps of the town are choking our car engines with.

Though of course I am no technical expert on evaluating the quality of Oil being provided to us but then any person who has driven a car for a reasonable period of time, can even by simply hearing the sound that the car engine makes, can make a fair enough assessment of the quality of Oil that the tank holds. I am sorry to say but the awful chattering that the car engines makes when running on fuel filled in the Fuel Pumps of Kalimpong, is a sure shot sign of there being something seriously wrong in the fuel supplied.

With so many hundreds of cars clogging the roads of Kalimpong, it's a wonder why nobody, including the otherwise hyper sensitive drivers Unions, makes any effort to check what is wrong. Everyone seems to agree that there is something fishy going on but no one is motivated enough to take any further steps.

I am told that during the tenure of the previous S.D.O. of Kalimpong, a complaint had been made and if rumors are to be believed, an eyewash of an enquiry was made before the matter being swept under the carpet. Why??? Well you can take your guess!!!

So I guess it brings us back to the suggestion on the posters "Sell your car buy a horse".

YOUR PAGE YOUR PAGE YOUR PAGE YOUR PAGE YOUR

Dear Sir,
The following is a glowing tribute to the late Mr. Tashi of Gompus.

We had a chance meeting with an elderly Mr. Mrityunjay Sen, ex-senior Engineer of Texmaco, in May 04 at Calcutta. On hearing that I am from Kalimpong, his face lit up as he launched into an eloquent account of his personal experience in Kalimpong on Dewali day, 1976.

They had arrived rather late on Dewali evening and were desperate for accommodation, especially so as Mrs. Sen was feverish. Having found no place to stay they finally landed at the door-steps of Gompus. Even Gompus was full up. Mr. Tashi simply embraced them with warm welcome & assurance of shelter. They were giving hot tea & snacks & with great kindness Mr. Tashi hastily cleared his own daughter's room & made it comfortable & ready to accommodate Mr. & Mrs. Sen. They were also served with steaming & delicious MO-MOS and soup.

Next day, refreshed & rested, Mr. & Mrs. Sen were able to find proper lodging in another place with Mr. Tashi's recommendation. Mind you, Mr. Tashi did assure them of continued hospitality if they so wished! And for all this, Mr. Sen vouches, Mr. Tashi charged them nothing even waiving aside their words of gratitude & appreciation.

Mr. Sen recalled this incident with fond appreciation & amazement in the midst of the assembled guest that evening at my daughter's place. How simple uplifting to receive such tribute, even though posthumous, to one's husband / father over a span of 28 years!

How often & where can we possibly expect such generosity of spirit today! Truly, Mr. Tashi and his family did Kalimpong proud by making this town synonymous with old world hospitality.

Yours,
Dipti R. Dikshit.

DO YOU HAVE ANY THING THAT
YOU WANT TO SHARE WITH THE
REST OF
KALIMPONG???

HAVE YOUR SAY AT

YOUR
PAGE

Jelep La

remains closed to the delight of tourism

By Ville Saikku

The opening of trade routes between China and India was a giant step forward in friendship and co-operation between the world's most populated countries. Years of political tension seem to be a distant memory as the historic trade route through Nathu La pass brings prosperity to Northern Sikkim much to the delight of citizens along the route. The residents of Kalimpong however, are not as jubilant as the other old trade route through the Jelep La Pass, which brought fame and fortune for hundreds of years through silk, cotton textiles, spices and wool among other things remains closed. Kalimpong has been bypassed, as the city of Gangtok now enjoys the riches of the trade route. Many people living in Kalimpong feel that the decision of the Central Government and the West Bengal Government not to open Jelep La Pass along with the Nathu La Pass is extremely unfair. But this does not mean that the residents of Kalimpong should fall into despair, because to many outsiders like me, the city has a lot to offer and a lot to feel proud about. Most of the other tourists I have come across in Kalimpong treasure



A hoarding in Sikkim celebrating the opening of trade through Nathu La

the very things that the huge trucks of the trade route thundering down the main road would kill, the tranquillity and peacefulness that has brought most of us to these magnificent mountains. Imagine what 500 trucks a day blowing up black smoke and toxic fumes into the homes, offices and shops located on the Main Road would feel like and how it would change the look of the city. Would the tourists that search for the peace, calmness and the famous hospitality of the residents be encouraged to look for these things somewhere else? What would be left of the natural habitats for the next generations?

These are all questions one must consider against all the good things the trade route would bring to the city. As a tourist, all I can do is describe to you what I see now and why I consider this place as a wonder of the world more breath taking than the great Taj Mahal in Agra. I first heard about Kalimpong through a friend of mine, who encouraged me first to see life on the plains before heading to the Himalayan Mountains. I took his advice and arrived in Delhi instead of flying straight to Bagdogra, to 'experience the other India', as my friend described it. Delhi was so hot,

JELEPLA: TRADE OR TOURISM???

humid and overwhelmingly huge that for a Nordic from a country of a mere 5 million inhabitants, the scene portrayed in front of my eyes was pretty incomprehensible. Sweating like I have never sweated before in my life I tried to make my way through the crowds only to be stopped every few steps by someone grabbing my arm to try and push me into a taxi, sell me something or beg for money. After a few days of

of little shops offering everything I could think of. Even now the helpfulness and generosity of the people never seem to stop amazing me, as the residents of Kalimpong are willing to take time out to guide you to your destination when lost and offer to share their umbrella with a total stranger when the sudden burst of rain catches the monsoon-virgin off-guard. Such generosity and helpfulness does not exist in the metropolitans of the



There used to be three Chinese Trade Agencies in India earlier- One in Delhi, one in Kolkata and the last one in Kalimpong. The building in the picture above is the one that housed the Trade agency in Kalimpong . Its ruins can still be seen today at lower Tripai area of the town

changing my T-shirt at 2-hour intervals, I was ready to experience something different, as I was fast running out of clean T-shirts. Upon arriving in Kalimpong from Siliguri I was first amazed by the scenery that unfolded around me. Mountains as far as the eye could see in every direction had such a calming effect on me, that I understood my friend's hesitation in over-explaining and describing Kalimpong to me. I had arrived in a place that none of the books I had read before venturing to India could do justice to. Everything was a walk away, the market on Wednesdays and Saturdays and the array

world, where people do not even know their next door neighbours. This is the image of Kalimpong I want to take back with me to Europe, the helpful, open and generous people, the calmness of life and the manageable scale traffic. After a few days of walking up and down the steep roads and stairs of Gangtok I was relieved to be back in Kalimpong, like the two Norwegian tourists I bumped into today on the Main Road. 'We came back, because nothing compares to Kalimpong,' they concluded. I could not agree more. □

BHENAJU

By Monila De

Mr. Pancha Ratna Pradhan is one of the oldest and illustrious residents of Kalimpong. He is very well known and respected due to his successful political, educational career and a stalwart of the Christian community. I do admire him for all his great achievements and qualities but to me he is first and foremost, my Bhenaju.

I met him through my Sunkamari didi of course and got to know him better over the years as a caring family man, intelligent, knowledgeable, who did not bore me with politics but kept me well entertained with his escapades and experiences with a touch of refreshing humour. He also advised and helped me whenever I needed it. For me he is an ideal Bhenaju.

His first love was politics and second, my Sunkamari didi. But, then because of his first love he almost lost his first love.

He was the Secretary of the Gorkha League and a teacher at S.U.M.I. when he laid eyes on the vivacious, charming young Lepcha lady whom he taught. The attraction was mutual. Bhenaju was a dashing handsome man. An eligible bachelor belonging to the same church as her, both from



distinguished families of Kalimpong. Could there be a better match for my Didi? But Didi's Phupu Mrs. David Mohon, who had brought her up as her own daughter, turned down the offer of marriage when Bhenaju's father approached her formally.

Although Phupu knew in her heart of hearts that Bhenaju was ideally suited for her beloved neice, she was politically bound not to bless this union. She was the President of the Lepcha community, a champion of their cause. Her line of thinking was that the Nepalis came to Kalimpong the land of the Lepchas then dominated them economically, socially and politically and now they were audacious enough to ask to marry their daughter? In this case, a Nepali who was the Secretary of the Gorkha League, their arch rivals. No, never such a match was impossible she decided. Phupu herself married out of her community but the Mr. D. Monon was not a Nepali. She would certainly lose face and creditability in her community if she, of all people gave her nieces in marriage to a Nepali.

The young lovers were not going to take no for an answer. They decided to elope. A very popular well practiced procedure in this part of the world. The date, time, and meeting place was decided by them. For, Didi her handsome, dashing prince was not going to whisk her away on a white steed but in a Austin car.

At the appointed time the old car coughed, rattled and came to a halt at the meeting place. Bhenaju

When he arrived in Shantineketan for his graduation in 1944, the Bengali students could not quite figure out which part of the country he was from. "I am a Nepali," he said. "You are from Nepal then?" No, I am from Kalimpong in the Himalayas.

jumped out anxiously. Would she be there? Had Phupu made her change her mind? Was she locked up in her room? He was about to rub a dose of "surti" in his mouth to calm his jittering nerves when she appeared from the dark, put her hand in his to let go.

Bhenaju was ecstatic with joy, he bundled her into the car and ordered the driver to make a hasty get away. The small car was overloaded with the two of Bhenaju's cousins who had accompanied him, in case they had to use strong-arm tactics to achieve their goal, the old car moaned, groaned under their total weight and crawled instead of galloping like a horse to the dismay of the fleeing couple.

On the third day, as customs demands, Bhenaju's father and elders of the family informed Phupu about her niece's whereabouts and asked for permission to visit her with offerings. To apologize for Bhenaju's misdeed of stealing her beloved niece. Phupu flatly refused to see them.

Bhenaju's elder sister Mrs. Sushila Rao, an orthodox lady insisted that Sunkamari Didi should stay in her house until her marriage to Bhenaju. Two weeks later the couple joined in holy matrimony by the Padre in Bhenaju's house.

This elopement caused quite a stir in Kalimpong. My mother was very happy for Sunkumarididi. "It is difficult to find husbands in Kalimpong, leave alone handsome eligible ones like Pancha Ratna", she said. Whenever she visited Phupu she tried to bridge the gap between the niece. Ever the birth of the first grandchild Naba, did not bring them together as they always do in Bollywood films.

I left Kalimpong to attend college and didn't meet them for years. Many years later, when I met them, I got to know Bhenaju better. I usually meet them at parties thrown at the SUMI principal's house or in my house, Monjula. Didi served sumptuous dinners while Bhenaju regaled us with his escapades and experiences.

While everybody smoked cigarettes Bhenaju would disappear from the drawing room for a few minutes and slip back in again. The reason for his frequent disappearances was "surti" (Chewing tobacco). "I have never seen a gentleman taking "surti" I said to him one day. He sheepishly told me that it was a bad habit that he had picked up as early as class five in SUMI.

This is how it came about. He and his friends noticed that the class teacher would frequently disappear behind the blackboard. Intrigued the boys in the front row of the class,



Mr.P.R.Pradhan accepting the National Teachers award from Ghani Zail Singh in Delli

discreetly peeped behind the blackboard and found the teacher rubbing "surti" on the palm of his hand. Some of the boy's including Bhenaju decided to try it out. If their teacher could take it why not them. The result was disastrous. They puked violently. Giddiness overtook them and they collapsed on the floor. They never touched the stuff until they were in the English class, Class seven. They were taught English in this class and they felt very grownup and important. Some of the teachers were foreigners who smoked and even offered the boys cigarettes. The boys decided that "surti" was easier to take, cheaper and had the same effect, so they brought dried

tobacco leaves, minced them and had them with 'chuna". Bhenaju got completely addicted to it and has it till today.

Once Bhenaju had to do without his favorite 'surti' for six months when his teacher, friend and mentor, Mr. Ranjit Subba asked him to join him in Western Nepal. He had to go to the remote Syanjanwakat district to educate the villagers in politics to make them conscious of their right's, to move towards a democratic system of Government and preserve Nepal as a sovereign country. At that time there was a rumor that Nepal could be easily annexed by India or China. So efforts were being made to educate the public by the Gorkha Dal to stop this.

This area of Nepal was very remote, the journey hazardous, steep and difficult. He and his companions were supplied with mules to travel on but they soon ended up by dismounting and pushing the buxom buttons of the mules up the steep slopes instead of riding them. When he arrived at his destination he was dismayed to find that 'surti' was not available there. Fortunately, one of his companions happened to be Bharat Shamsheer Jung Bhadnur Rana, the son of Brigadier Jung Bhadnur Rana. The young, pleasure-loving Rana had carried sample quantities of booze, cigars and cigarettes to comfort and minimize the hardships of his sojourn in the wild. Noticing Bhenaju's listlessness and irritability, he soon discovered that it was due to lack of 'surti'.

He immediately offered Bhenaju his cigarettes. He soon became a chain smoker.

The Governor of Pokhara suspecting Bhenaju of dubious activities in the hills summoned him. The Governor then realized that Bhenaju was not a real threat to his domain but well versed in political discourse plus a graduate while he was only a matriculate and would not be able to tackle him. He therefore, made himself scarce whenever Bhenaju went to visit him.

After spending six months in the wilds, Bhenaju arrived in Kathmandu as a guest of his newly acquired friend, The Rana. Hot, tired and dust laden from his long journey, the first thing that he wanted to do on arrival, was to have a much needed bath. He was ushered into a bathroom well equipped with tubs of steaming hot water, fresh towels, toiletries and two young maids. Bhenaju waited impatiently for the maids to get out of the bathroom so that he could proceed with his bath but the maids just smiled and started undressing him. Shocked, he tried to escape from their clutches but they cornered him and proceeded seriously and methodically with their duty. It was their duty to give bathers a thorough cleansing. Bhenaju objected violently to what he considered molestation and invasion of privacy in the bathroom. The more he protested, the more determined the girls grew so he shyly and reluctantly gave in, for them to carry on with their jobs of undressing, oil massage, through scrubbing with soap and hot water, toweling then smothering him with talcum powder. He exited from the bathroom a new man, completely refreshed and relaxed. Never to forget the experience.

When he arrived in Shantineketan for his graduation in 1944, the

Bengali students could not quite figure out which part of the country he was from. "I am a Nepali," he said. "You are from Nepal then?" No, I am from Kalimpong in the Himalayas." "How do you live in the mountains, don't you fall down the steep slopes?" "How do you build houses there?" They asked in amazement. Bhenaju was appalled at their ignorance. They never were quite convinced in spite of much explaining by Bhenaju.

The normal dress code in Shantineketan was Kurta pyjama and a shoal topee for attending classes in the open air. The girls and boys dressed in their finery every evening at dinner. One day to rag Bhenaju the boys insisted that he wear his Nepali costume to dinner. So Bhenaju wore his "Dowra Sural", "Potuka" around his waist complete with a "Khukuri" tucked in it. The only item missing was his Nepali topee, so one of the boys borrowed a turban from a Rajput

When Bhenaju appeared in his outfit looking so handsome and majestic, they held their breath and after a thunderous applause, declared him the "Prince of Nepal".

student to complete his gear. The students waited in the dining hall for him, ready to ridicule and laugh at his strange dress but the laugh was on them. When Bhenaju appeared in his outfit looking so handsome and majestic, they held their breath and after a thunderous applause, declared him the "Prince of Nepal".

Apart from innocent, harmless ragging in Shantineketan the students often indulged in pranks and leg pulling. Bhenaju's friend, Ghose, was an incorrigible prankster. Shantineketan is teeming with snake. So one day, Ghose managed to lure a small snake into an empty cigarette tin, packed, labeled and stamped it. Then he asked one of his friends to deliver it to his girlfriend at dinner. Ghose's girl friend intrigued and excited at receiving the parcel opened it and drew back in horror as the snake reared its head and stared at her with its beady eyes ready to strike. No harm was done but the lady could have suffered a heart attack.

Bhenaju due to his active life in the past could hardly spend time with his wife who supported him through thick and thin. Behind every great man, there is a greater woman. Today he leads a quiet life with her. Now he sits in his armchair every day mulling over his many exciting adventures and achievements- of course with a good dose of "Surti". ■

FUTURE OF KALIMPONG



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THEIR WORDS OUR VOCABULARY

By Dr.S.B. Wangyel

Our cousins across the Mechi river and we speak the same language, and in spite of that, at times we differ so radically that one cannot understand the other. Consider the simple fruit lemon. While it is 'nimbu' to us it is 'kagatay' to them and our apple, 'aifal' is 'seau' in their speech. Beyond our hills 'khidki' is 'jhyal' and while we are okay with 'dailo' they are more comfortable with 'dhoka'. But even then these alternatives don't pose a major predicament because the meanings have not been altered but that is not so with the word 'bhuja' which is 'chana-chur' in our area but across the river it takes on a completely different meaning. There 'Bhuja khanuhawas' would mean 'Have some cooked rice.' Then there is this strange metamorphosis they have brought about which transformed the 'churote' into a cigarette but fortunately we did not follow suit and kept cheroot, as it ought to mean, a cigar. Incidentally, the word is not Nepali and comes to us and to the rest of the world from the Tamil shuruttu (Malayam variation, churuttu) meaning a roll of tobacco. But then 'churote' as a cigarette is not too far away from the original term since both 'churote' and cigarette are tobacco products and both end up in fire and smoke. However, what we have next is amazing and this involves us only. Of the many morphs we have engineered in our words and phrases this one is an awkwardly odd one. 'Bhutro' is a common word in our district and is often used to express disgust or contempt and because of the frequency of use we are familiar with expressions like 'bhutro khanu', 'bhutroko garcha', 'bhutro khelcha' etc. but they are better left behind in our hills and best not uttered in the land of Pashupathinath, and that will save you the ultimate awkwardness, for in for in many parts of Nepali the word unfortunately translates as the male genitals. One of the most confusing alternatives we come across during our interaction with our counterparts is in the use of the word 'martole'. When somebody asks for a 'martole' we will nmally pass him the hammer but pour counterparts will invariably go for, of all the things, the screwdriver or more poperly 'pechkas' in our vocabulary. When our kids red the English alphabets they do not say 'yum' and 'yun' for M and N neither do the privileged kids study in 'boarding' but rather in English medium schools. We don't call our kids 'bacha' or 'bachi' but 'chhora' and 'chhori' and while ours write on a 'khata' theirs do so on a 'kapi'. They have their 'pustakalya', 'ausadhalya' and 'pathshala' and we have our 'laibari', 'dabai-dokan' and 'eskool' but differences don't end here for there are too many to be listed but just to give a small taste of how divergent our 'common' vocabulary is a small list is being included. We go to the 'gaddi' to buy our rakshi while they sit or ride on it, we drive a 'gari' and they a 'motor', our chauffeur is a driver and theirs is a 'guruji', we eat 'baigun' and 'rumbhera' but they prefer 'bhanta' and 'gollbhera', we go to money 'satnu' they want to 'bhajaaunu', our opposite numbers measure their lads in 'ropani' and we do it in yards and meters, we have always climbed 'sidi/siri' but they rather do it on a 'bharyang', we keep warm with a 'shirug' and not with 'dolai' and we normally pay a 'jyela' for a job done but our co-speakers dole out 'waytan' or 'majdoori'. In the world of entertainment ours is the 'khas keta' and 'khas keti' and occasionally 'hero' and 'heroinee' unlike their 'abhineta' and 'abhinetri' or 'nayak' and 'nayika'. Nevertheless, the final truth of the matter is, despite a large inventory of differences, we still speak the "same" language and I am 'ekdamai', 'pura', 'ek sauma ek sau' or as they would say 'sampoorna', 'dharo dharo', 'atyanta' sure of it. □

Right to Information Act 2005

As per the Act, which has become operative in all parts of Republic of India except the State of Jammu & Kashmir, every public authority, (of the district and sub-divisions) were required to

- a) Publish within one hundred and twenty days from the enactment of this Act, i.e. 21 June 2005 –
- 1) The particulars of its organisation. Function and duties;
 - 2) The powers and duties of its officers and employees;
 - 3) The procedure followed in the decision making process, including channels of supervision and accountability;
 - 4) The norms set by it for the discharge of its functions;
 - 5) The rules, regulations, instructions, manuals and records, held by it or under its control or used by its employees for discharging its functions;
 - 6) A statement of the categories of documents that are held by it or under its control;
 - 7) The particular of any arrangement that exists for consultation with, or representation by, the members of the public in relation to the formulation of its policy or implementation thereof;
 - 8) A statement of the boards, councils, committees and other bodies consisting of two or more persons constituted as its part or for the purpose of its advice, and as to whether meetings of those boards, councils, committees and other bodies are open to public, or the minutes of such meetings are accessible for public;
 - 9) A directory of its officers and employees;
 - 10) The monthly remuneration received by each of its officers and employees, including the system of compensation as provided in its regulations;
 - 11) The budgets allocated to each of its agency, indicating the particulars of all places, proposed expenditures and reports on disbursements made;
 - 12) The manner of execution of subsidy programme, including the amounts allocated and the details of beneficiaries of such programmes;
 - 13) Particulars of recipients of concession, permits or authorizations granted by it;
 - 14) Details in respect of the information, available to as held by it, reduced in an electronic form;
 - 15) The particulars of facilities available to citizens for obtaining information including the working hours of a library or reading room if maintained for public use.
 - 16) The names, designations and other particulars of the Public Information Officers;
 - 17) Such other information as may be prescribed; and thereafter update these publications every year. Every information as detailed above shall be made known as communicated widely through notice boards, news papers, public announcements, media broadcasts, the internet as any other means including inspection of officers of any public authority.

"The Right to Information Act 2005 enacted by the Indian Parliament is probably one of the most wonderful pieces of legislature gifted by the government to its people after Independence"

**— N.P.Dikshit
President
Kalimpong Consumers Forum**

The details given is just one part of the Act. The Act deals with means and ways . to extract information within 30 days of making request.

It is an Act to provide information to citizens in order to promote transparency and accountability in the working of every public authority, and to contain corruption and to hold Governments and their instrumentalities accountable to the citizens.

An extract of this Act is being published in Himalayan Times for the benefit of the citizens of Kalimpong on behalf of the Kalimpong Consumers Forum

DARJEELING

Himalayan Times

Eight page
special section
on Darjeeling

Sarah Gurung a thoroughbred Darjeeling girls has scaled heights which Darjeeling is sure proud of. After Jyoti Brahamin who blazed into the Indian Beauty scene a few years back its now Sarahs turn to storm into the world of glamour in Nepal. Her first appearance in the Miss Nepal contest won her the prestigious title of **MISS ASIA PACIFIC NEPAL 2004 (1st Runners-Up)** and she vindicated her selection by winning the title for **'BEST COSTUME'** at the International pageant. She is now a very popular VJ, a successful actress and probably the most sought-after model in Nepal.

Schooled at the Loreto Convent, in Darjeeling she is very much a daughter of the Hills. In a frank and candid interview with her friend, Mr. Saikishor, she talks about her struggle, achievements and her future.

How did you get into modeling and into the glamour world?

Sarah - After I gave my I.C.S.E. from Loreto Convent, Darjeeling, I went back to Nepal. I was doing my +2 from the Kathmandu Academy when one day my mom got me the forms to participate in the Miss Nepal Beauty pageant. She had a certain belief in my abilities and she encouraged me all the way. She is the one who made me what I am today.

How does it feel to be a successful model, a popular VJ and an overall celebrity?

Sarah - Its like a dream come true. Every man dream of becoming a king. We women too, dream of becoming Queens, not of kingdoms but of beauty. I too wanted to become one. Its really nice when you just walk down the road and everybody turns to look at you and some even come running for autographs. All the



Sarah Gurung: Miss Asia Pacific- Nepal, 2004

importance you get really makes you feel very special.

What were your experiences like when you were crowned as the 'MISS NEPAL-1st RUNNERS UP-2004'?

Sarah - I was so very nervous that I was trembling with fear. I looked at everybody and everybody seemed to be looking at me. I really wanted to shout at my mom for putting me into



all this. But then, the hosts announced my name and I was over exhilarated. I realized, hard-work and dedication always pays.

What were your experiences like at the 'MISS ASIA PACIFIC' International pageant?

Sarah - When I went for the 'MISS ASIA PACIFIC' pageant, I didn't even feel I was going for one. It was more like a summer camp for me. Some girls were too good and some were too bad. I am 5ft 3 1/2 inches tall and my room mate was 5 feet 11 inches (Miss Tahiti). We were kept in a 7 star hotel and were told that we would be treated with the best

foods of China. But for full month we survived on octopuses, oysters, snails, dogs, sharks, lizards and sticky rice. We had big problems with the language but overall it was a wonderful experience and I enjoyed every bit of it.

You won a title at the International pageant, can you tell us something about that?

Sarah- Its been 10 years of the Miss Nepal Pageant and till now nobody had won the 'Best Costume' title in my talent round and thus, became the 1st lady to win a title from an International pageant. So people respect me more for that.

How many music indess, ads, shows, have you done so far?

Sarah - I have done music indess for Nirman - Sita Kharel, Aastha, Kamal Man Singh, Roshan Gurung, Arun Thapa (Remake), Jeeten Lepcha and Ram Krishna Dhakal.

I have done Ads for Dabur (Shampoo, Oil, face-pack), Jolly Drink, Jeemy Noodles, U.F.O and Gossip.

I have done shows for the Orphanage children & Cancer-Relief Society. Charity Shows and concerts I have done many. I have even done a few dance performances.

I have worked in 2 telefilms - College and House Full. And will be doing my 1st movie shortly

And as you know, I also host the show LOVELINE for Nepal 1 too.

Your words of advice on fashion for our fashion enthusiasts.

Sarah - Take fashion as your passion and be comfortable in what you wear.

What are your forth-coming projects?

Sarah - I will be doing a movie in the very near future, and in October I will be going to Korea for a charity show.

What memories of Darjeeling have you got as a school girl? Any sweet memories?

Sarah - I wish those days would come back again coz I really miss my good old days at Loreto Convent. Taking about memories, I have got so many things to share that this session is not going to be enough. So, in short, I just want to say that being in Darjeeling was a sweet memory.

How has Darjeeling played a part in shaping you so as the personality you are today?

Sarah - I used to be shy girl before but staying in Darjeeling made me confident. It was in Darjeeling that I realised my abilities and developed a personality that helped me win the crown later on.

What do you like about Darjeeling?



Name : Sarah Gurung.

Age : 20 Yrs.

**Profession : MODEL,
VJ,ANCHOR.**

B. day : 1ST March.

Zodiac : Piscean.

e-mail :

Sarah_Gurung@hotmail.com

**Turn One : Good
music (trans &
techno).**

**Turn Offs : Bad
Breath.**

**Philosophy of life :
Respect the world and
the world will respect
you.**

**Style Mantra : Be
natural and apply good
make-up.**

**A must have : Good
personality.**

**Love is ; Tragedy.
Your Beauty secret :**

**Let it be a secret!!
Darjeeling is..... : My
favourite place.**

Sarah - Darjeeling people. They are so hospitable, friendly and supporting. Besides that, I am a die-hard fan of 'Aloo Dum' and 'Jhaal-moorie'.

How does it feel to visit Darjeeling after so long and after achieving so much?

Sarah - Within these 4 years, Darjeeling has changed a lot. Many new things have come up. But one thing good about Darjeeling is that the people are the same - very down-to-earth and very welcoming. I felt like I was coming back home for my vacations and now I feel its time to go back to school.

Do you wish to do any projects in the Hills, when offered?

Sarah - Of course. Afterall it's the place where I spent my childhood.

When do you plan to come again to Darjeeling?

Sarah - In December, for Christmas.

Your message to Darjeeling and to the people of the Hills...

Sarah - Keep smiling!! I will miss you all.

Words for your fans...

Sarah - Thank you for loving me and supporting me. ■

Miss Nysa Pradhan
9832404628

ht friends

Miss Richa Baraily
9832459200

ht friends

Miss Sweta Biswakarma
9832404811

ht friends

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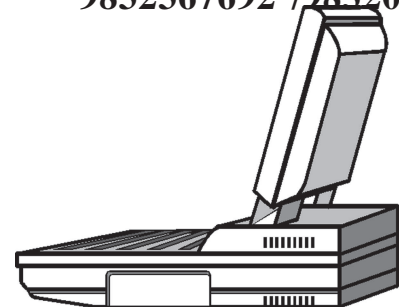
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THE TWILIGHT OF THE GODS

Nayan Subba



The Darjeeling Himalayan Railway (DHR) undoubtedly has an outstanding universal appeal. Inscribed on the 2nd December 1999 by the UNESCO as a World Heritage site as an extraordinary example of an innovative transportation system on the social and economic development of a multi-cultural region which served as a model for similar developments in other parts of the world.

The Siliguri-Darjeeling line was opened on the 3rd of July 1881. An account of the inauguration was published in Calcutta (Kolkata) based newspaper "The Englishman" on the 7th of July 1881. The DHR would not have been built had it not been for Franklin Prestage with his remarkable vision and determination. Inaugurated by Sir Ashley Eden, Lieutenant Governor of Bengal on the 3rd of July 1881 it will be 125 years old in 2006.

While taking some photographs of the Sonada Railway Station in January 2006 a somewhat battered steam engine was fighting its way up the hills with two carriages. A Railway employee with a sardonic smile (possibly against his own department), squeezing a patch of khaini (tobacco) in his palms casually remarked that almost all the "B" Class engines would die of neglect in the next ten years or so. These venerable engines treated almost at the par with tutelary gods by the local staff were

sadly dying one by one and almost all of them were on their way out. The heartbreaking news stunned me. Ominously it seemed to me like Wagner's "The Twilight of the Gods" not exactly referring it to be the final destruction of the world but the impending apocalypse of the B Class engines.

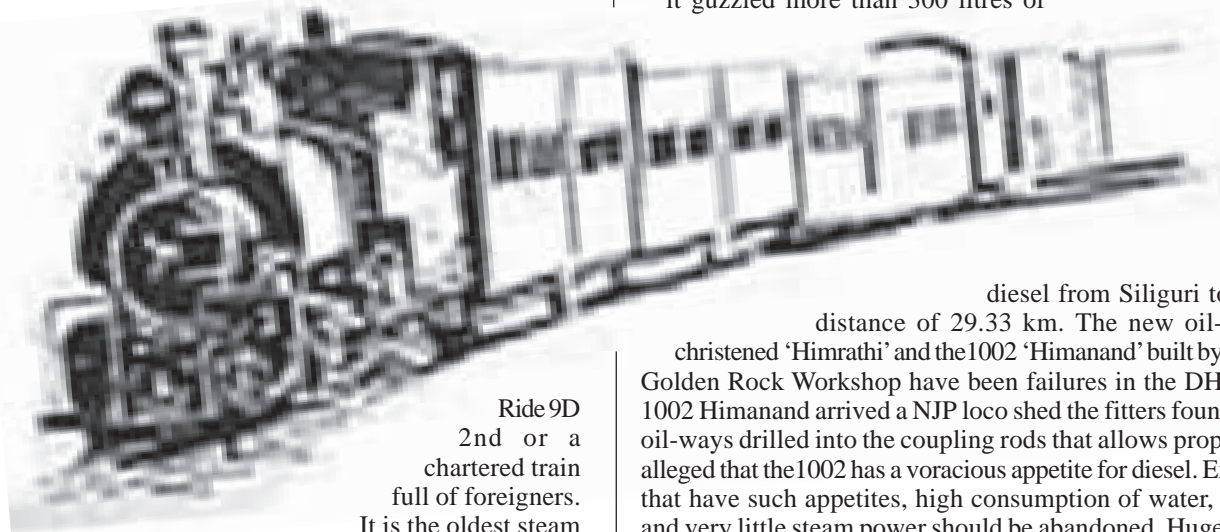
34 B Class engines also known as the 'Wasp' and one A Class engine were handed over to the Indian Government in 1948. The DHR received Indian Railways running numbers from 777 to 808 in 1958 by that time some had been already scrapped, plinthed or sold. At present the DHR has only 13 B Class

engines. Out of the thirteen two are at Tindharia Workshop undergoing major repairs, one (792B) recently sent to Chennai on 13. 3. 06 to be restored and renovated, three languishing at Siliguri leaving only seven engines at the most in some form of working order.

It is a pity that very few people in Darjeeling know the venerable 113 year old 779B sometimes seen docked in the Darjeeling loco shed, sometimes busy shunting rolling stock or hauling the Joy

motive power. Once the boiler is damaged the engine stands destroyed. Its smoke-box door is in a bad shape, the fire box is about to be damaged due to inferior quality of steam coal, its 58 tubes are at the point of exhaustion, fire pan plate and fire box plate are in a bad shape.

The Indian Railway's effort to introduce oil-fired engines to relieve the steam engines from further deterioration has proved less than a success. The original distinguished lines of 787B has been destroyed, it looks hideous with the re-profiled oil-fired engine design. The experiments has flawed from the start, far from hauling carriages the oil-fired 787B has hardly been able to propel itself up to Tindharia. It is said that in one of the trails it guzzled more than 300 litres of



Ride 9D
2nd or a
chartered train
full of foreigners.
It is the oldest steam

locomotive regularly running in India and the flagship of the DHR fleet.

It is necessary to draw a profile of this of this incredible machine. The 779B was ordered in 1892 and delivered in 1893 it has been working continuously since then. It was built at the Atlas Works of Sharp Stewart and Co. in Glasgow, UK under order no E 1010, works no 3882, was given DHR no 21 and categorized as B' Class, 0-4-0 (an engine with no leading or trailing wheels with four driving wheels on two coupled axles), ST + WT (Saddle Tank and Well Tank). The Indian Steam Railway No 779 was given to it in 1958 when the DHR was passed to the control of the Northeast Frontier Railway. The colour scheme was also changed to blue from brick-red livery. In the late 1970s its name was 'Mountaineer' painted in the smoke-box door. Now it is known as the 'Himalayan Bird'. Though built in 1892 it has a curved bunker bottom of the ex-Raipur locomotives built in 1925! The 779B has a distinct whistle in high C natural. It has a tiara attached to its funnel, customized fretted eagles on its cylinders. The spelling of the Scottish city on a rectangular plate below the cab side is 'Glassgow' instead of Glasgow and the date of manufacture is 1889 instead of 1892. Fanciful conundrums that adds to its romance. It is still the best steam locomotive the DHR has but it has been operating with a patched boiler, which has become old due to wear and tear and unable to maintain steam pressure, consequently it has lost most of its

diesel from Siliguri to Tindharia a mere distance of 29.33 km. The new oil-fired engines 1001 christened 'Himrathi' and the 1002 'Himanand' built by Southern Railway's Golden Rock Workshop have been failures in the DHR gradients. When 1002 Himanand arrived a NJP loco shed the fitters found that there were no oil-ways drilled into the coupling rods that allows proper lubrication! It is alleged that the 1002 has a voracious appetite for diesel. Experimental engines that have such appetites, high consumption of water, adhesion problems and very little steam power should be abandoned. Huge amounts of money have gone down the drain with such fruitless experiments, which allegedly is fast, becoming a racket. If they still insist on continuing with the tests they should brush off their vanity and consult the Ffestiniog Company in the UK who have the expertise. Oil-fired engine no 1002 has been sent to Golden Rock on the 7th of February 2006 for further modification. The present design of Engine no 787B converted into an oil-fired engine looks hideous. One should not tamper with the original character of the heritage property, nothing should be done to endanger or alter the basic structure of the engines, which is of immense historical value and world importance. Experimental oil-fired engines designed to reduce the pressure on vintage locomotives have proved a failure. The money spent on 787B, 1001, 1002 could have well spent on the restoration of the existing B Class engines. Except for the world famous B Class other locomotives have always showed their vulnerabilities in the difficult gradients of the DHR. A short sketch will make it clear.

1. The Beyer-Garret engine ordered in 1910 proved unsuitable for Darjeeling conditions and was closed to work on the Teesta Valley lines was left without work after the landslides of 1950 destroyed the lines. It was scrapped on the 30th November 1954. The DHR reverted to the B Class.

2. A petrol engine rail car was introduced in the DHR line in 1920, although it offered a new degree of comfort and clipped off about an hour it was shelved after two years as it developed engine trouble.

3. The Walford diesel one of the first diesel locomotives built in India in around 1942 developed problems of adhesion in the DHR line. It was sent back to Calcutta. The B Class took control again.

4. A small diesel engine built by Hunslet in 1942 was incapable of hauling carriages in the hill section. It was seen in the back-shed Siliguri Junction for sometime in 1945. It was not even listed in the DHR list stock.

5. The next diesel arrived in Darjeeling in the late 1950s. It was one of the Jung BB (Bo Bo) locomotives for use in the Matheran Line. It was susceptible to derailment in sharp bends and had high altitude combustion problems. Inspector Vijay Limboo IC Harishchandrapur PS remembers as a kid in 1960



when the infrastructure is already available. It mustn't be forgotten that three B Class locomotives (795B, & 796B and 797 B) were locally built in Tindharia Workshop between 1919 and 1925 although some parts were supplied from North British Locomotives. A few years ago two British engineers had overhauled engine no 791B at Tindharia with excellent results. Adrian Shooter who bought Engine no 778 B built in 1889 by Sharp Stewart and Co from the US museum a few years ago has restored the engine in UK that is now in robust health. Steam engines can also be restored and rejuvenated in India if the will is there. The main problem here is boiler

that a diesel engine derailed and crashed killing two persons. Perhaps that must have been the end the of the Bo Bo trials 6. The Suri and Nayer NDM6 Class 604 (Maverick) and 605 (Buccaneer) introduced in 2000 on the DHR line are doing fairly well but the engines are already showing signs of fatigue. They have the alleged reputation of frequent derailments, diminishing steam power, flange and tyre erosion. Once it develops snags the passengers are stranded, as there are no diesel technicians in the hill area. Whereas for the steam engines the local mechanics know them better than anyone else. It is the vernacular practices, which has kept the DHR engines running. It is said that genuine parts have not been supplied for the last five or six years.

So it is seen that experiments in the past to introduce a new system of locomotives for the DHR have all ended in failure. It is the B Class, alone which has proved itself eminently capable of hauling passengers up DHR gradients. To save these B Class engines from dying the up-gradation of Tindharia Workshop and the Tindharia Loco Shed is a must, no point shifting these heritage foundries to Siliguri Junction

replacements as there are no suitable suppliers so Tindharia Workshop has to be geared up for boiler manufacture and other important parts.

Notwithstanding the contretemps the Indian Railways are to be applauded for spending vast amounts of money in keeping the DHR running, repairing road breaches during the monsoons, preserving and restoring lines and heritage buildings. Despite huge losses running into crores they have no intention of backing out, the only snag is fruitless experiments with oil-fired engines, which is also allegedly running into crores.

Restoration and rejuvenation of the existing B Class engines in India is the need of the hour, any further delay might result in these venerable engines to go beyond repair. On the 31st of January 2006 the DHR Lover's Forum of Darjeeling met members of the London Society at the DHR Club of Windamere. They were unanimous in their feeling that they had come all the way to take a ride on the steam engines of Darjeeling. The magic of the steam must go on. ■

Dear Readers,

As per your request and our promise, Himalayan Times, will henceforth carry an eight page special section on Darjeeling from this issue onwards. All subscription &

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03552-255448/ 256732 or 9832016738.

Editor

FAC TS ON DARJEELING

VIVIEN LEIGH: HOLLYWOOD ACTRESSES

Extracted from the Fallen Cicadas by Sanjay Biswas & Barun Roy

The famous Hollywood actresses, Vivien Leigh was born in Darjeeling at the Eden Sanatorium on the 5th of November 1913. Her maiden name was Vivien Mary Hartley. Her father Ernest Hartley was a businessman with a rather adventurous personality and her mother Gertrude Robinson Yackje was a dedicated mother and housewife. Vivien was a happy little nymph in love with Darjeeling. In one of her final interviews, Vivien is quoted as saying, "I had perhaps the best childhood any child could ever have, simply because I was born in Darjeeling.

I would frolic around the garden and forests, play with butterflies and talk with birds and have the most glorious time. It was definitely the happiest part of my life. And it was in Darjeeling itself that Vivien had her first acting experience. When she was three she was supposed to sing "Little Bo Beep", dressed as a Dresden shepherdess, but once onstage she announced that she was going to recite it. However, when Vivien eventually grew up to attain the age of six, her mother decided that it would be better for her to go to school in England, Vivien is said to

have spent a week weeping. She was ultimately taken to England and enrolled into a Catholic Convent of the sacred Heart in Roe Hampton. ■

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Just look at his report card...Its quite pointless trying to make him study. It would be better if he stays illiterate and follows you into politics.

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Expression!!!

Thoughts of a Borderline Aesthete

Norden Micheal Lepcha

What mighty God created you?
A beauty...in body and mind,
What mightier God is that?
Who cloths you so,
Revealing all perfection in you.

The moralist in me,
Chided, asked me to flee,
From the snares your creed lay.
But that rebellious young aesthete,
Inspired... encouraged me,
To admire..
The piece of beauty in you.

To look, or not to look?
I taxed my brains with this,
For hours, days, and months.

Moralist from the Books quoted,
The multiple aspects of sin.
Aesthete from within cried,
"A thing of beauty is joy forever"
Still undecided my heart aches,
And so when I encounter your tribe,
I see but pretend not to look

W elcome

Sonam B. Wangyel

If you have caught the breath of my thoughts
And felt its shape both fluid and firm
You are beginning to understand.
But if you have not touched the forms my music takes
And only heard the notes and never felt the vikes,
You are like the reeds that bend with the breeze:
Responding... Knowing not why.

You court my passion and pledge me cheer.
Your joys are obvious, loud and shared
But my joys are silent, almost ethereal
And does not arch the universe
In a rainbow for all to see..
While my sorrows are sacred for they chisel their pangs
In the cavernous labyrinths of my yesterdays.

You vow me moments of unbridled bliss
But my hours are akin to a dream- personal and totally mine
... It is to this dream, into the warmth of my breath
And to the eloquent silence of the unspoken words
Into a world like a sunset... serene, quiet, indefinable
Caught between the dusk and the dawn,
That you must seek and enter.

It is to my muted world that you have to peer into
...it is the un-played music that you must listen to.
Then you will register the writings on the frontier of my mind,
See the scores on my limping emotions
And inhale the ethereal joy doused in ecstasy.
It is then you will ride my humps and feel the pains,
And get swamped in the raptures of divine delight.
It is then you will float with me..
..through space and time... Unbound and infinite.

W elcome.

Brain?

Teasers

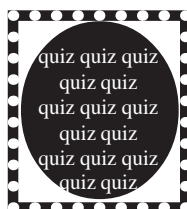
1. Name the author of the recently released book, "Footprints in the Himalaya."
2. By what name did Narsing Narayan Pradhan achieve fame?
3. Which mountaineer is nicknamed "Tiger of Snow" and "Snow Lion"?
4. Who is considered the first Nepali Film producer and director?
5. Which actress is returning to the Nepali Silver Screen in a movie titled "Amakko Kaakh", after a gap of 18 years?

Answers to questions
in the last issue

1. Sunil Prakash
2. Father Butty
3. Sonam Sherpa
4. Father Mcguire

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(hint: Restaurants in Darjeeling)

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Complete the above Jumble and send in your entry with the coupon given below by the 8th of September 2006 to win a free lunch for two at **Soods Garden Retreat, Kalimpong**. The correct answers for the jumble published in the last issue are

**MAHARANI, ST. ROBERT, TURNBULL, ST. MICHEAL, WEST
POINT & MOUNT HERMON**

The winner will be decided by a draw of lots. The names of all those who sent in correct answers for the jumble in the last issue are Subash Subba, Nimkit Karthak, Galysen Tshering, Subarna Baraily, Rima Subba, Imitaz, C.R. Limbu, Ganesh Lohani, Suraj Guha, Rekha Sundas, Bikash Chettri, Rohit Nirula, Suzan Pradhan, Vinny Pradhan, Dishes Roka, Yogesh Rai, Shivani Pradhan, Suresh Khati, Goma Bhutia, Namgyel Tshering, Reuben Lepcha, Amber Golay, Sruti Mukhia, Sidhhanta Chhetri, Kiran Agarwal, Sajel Rizal, Sonam Tshering, and the lucky winner is –

Kavita Bhitrikoty of Lower Bridle Road, Kalimpong

Please submit your entry in a plain sheet of paper
alongwith this coupon. Please do not tear this page
to submit your entry.



**jumble
coupon**



By Chef Meena Pradhan



Kabra

Ko Acchar

Ingredients

- Kabra 250gm (Boiled, Par Boiled, Drained & Smashed)
- Roasted Til 20gm
- Chopped Garlic 1 tbsp
- Chillie 6 pec
- Mustard Oil 6Tbsp
- Lemon juice of one lemon

Method

Heat Oil, add chopped garlic and chillies and add a dash of turmeric. Add to the boiled Kabra. Add salt to taste, Add lemon juice and mix well

Duku

Ko Aachar

Ingredients

- Duku 250 gm (Par Boiled)
- Til/Badam 50 gm (Roasted & pounded)
- Mustard Oil 3 Tbsp
- Fenugreek seeds 1 tbsp
- Green Chillies 5 pec
- Lemon Juice of one lemon
- Salt to taste

Method

Cut Duku into desired length, Par Boil it, keep it aside. Mix Til and Badam powder, lemon juice & Salt. Heat Oil till very hot, temper with Fenugreek seeds and Green Chillies and mix well. Serve with Rice or Roti

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